

Murkowski	Roberts	Stabenow
Murray	Rockefeller	Stevens
Nelson (FL)	Sarbanes	Sununu
Nelson (NE)	Schumer	Talent
Nickles	Sessions	Voinovich
Pryor	Shelby	Warner
Reed	Smith	Wyden
Reid	Snowe	

NOT VOTING—14

Allen	Inouye	Mikulski
Biden	Kerry	Santorum
Bunning	Kohl	Specter
Corzine	Lautenberg	Thomas
Edwards	Lieberman	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the President will be notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now return to legislative session.

The Senator from Kentucky.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for morning business, with Senators entitled to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I did not hear what the unanimous consent request was.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I was just asking unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators entitled to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Mrs. BOXER. Fine.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from California.

CALIFORNIA FOREST FIRES

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise today with great anxiety about what is happening in my State. You can see here behind me the view of one of the fires that is burning from the vantage point of a fireman. These fires have become the worst wildfires Californians have seen in decades. In less than 1 week they burned nearly twice as many acres as are burned statewide in the average fire year.

The numbers in my statement today may already be obsolete. Things are moving that fast in terms of property damage, homes destroyed, and so on. The wildfires range from as far south as the Mexican border to as far north as Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. They have consumed a total of more than 400,000 acres or 625 square miles. To put that in perspective, that is three times the size of Chicago. The fires are devouring businesses and homes and sometimes entire neighborhoods. More than 900 homes have already been destroyed and perhaps 30,000 more are in danger. I know people are without electricity in areas throughout the State. Many are escaping with only the clothes on their backs, and families

have had no time to gather anything other than their loved ones as they flee from an inferno that engulfs everything it touches.

More than 50,000 people have been evacuated and the numbers continue to climb. Thirty-six evacuation centers have already been set up in the five county areas. I spent pretty much all of yesterday speaking to mayors and council members and county supervisors and to Governor Davis. I talked three times to the head of FEMA, and I spoke with Andrew Card, the President's chief of staff, who was most helpful. The message I had for the President, through Mr. Card, was: Please, move quickly, as quickly as you can, to declare a national disaster because without that, we simply cannot get these fires under control. It has taken a while, but in the last couple of hours we had our declaration.

This is very important because it means the Forest Service can now go beyond its budget, because its budget is limited, and contract with departments all over the country to bring in the help we need.

I have been through a lot of disasters in my State. I served on the board of supervisors of Marin County. I have seen fires and floods and earthquakes, and then, as a 10-year Congresswoman, I have seen all this. I have not seen anything to this degree where we still don't have our arms wrapped around this problem. We don't have the problem contained, whereas usually when we have these disasters, we are up here saying we need to set up the FEMA agencies where we can now go and have people get repaid and get loans for their businesses and homes, and we will do that in time. That is very important. But right now we need to put out the fires.

I thank Nevada and Arizona. They have helped. They have sent between 25 and 50 firetrucks with personnel to our State.

I will give you another look at San Diego. This is the harbor. You can see it just has the eeriest look to it. You can see the flames in the background.

We also want to say that we have received 50 tanker trucks, and 12 air tankers are coming tomorrow. This is all good news for the people of San Diego. Supervisor Jacob was at her wit's end yesterday because she was not getting enough help. The other areas, the mutual aid, seem to be working better, but San Diego came along afterwards, and I have been very worried about them.

The crown jewels of California's beautiful landscape, our beautiful forests, have been hurt. We are going to have legislation that will in fact allow us to do fuel reduction close to communities. It is very important, when we have a bill that relates to our forests, that we put the money where it is needed, which is near the communities, and that we make sure that what we do will in fact help the communities.

The bill we are talking about is the Forestry and Community Assistance

Act, written by Senator LEAHY and myself. There are other proposals. I hope we can come to an agreement that the time is now to help our communities and to provide the resources to help them, not the big logging people, because that is the fight we are always waging.

Air traffic across the Nation has been disrupted by these fires. Hundreds of flights in and out of southern California have been canceled or suspended. Our brave firefighters, more than 7,000, are frantically working in conjunction with the California Department of Forestry, the U.S. Forest Service, California Highway Patrol, the Red Cross, and now, happily, FEMA, which are very much involved to contain these fires.

Many are still raging out of control. I want to be back here as soon as I can to talk about how we can rebuild our communities. But today we are talking about fires that are raging out of control.

I thank White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card. I thank FEMA Director Michael Brown. I did try to call Tom Ridge. Unfortunately, he was out of the country, but I spoke with his people and again with many of the local people.

In closing, let me say that my heart is with the people of San Bernardino County where two major fires are burning: The Old fire—by the way, we think arson was to blame for that fire. I have written to the Attorney General and will call him in the hope that he will invite in the FBI to get to the bottom of who would do such a deed. The other fire in San Bernardino is the Old Fire, 24,000 acres. The Grand Prix is 52,000 acres. In San Diego, there were three major fires. Everyone is struggling to make sure they don't merge.

We do have 48,000 customers without power in San Diego. In Otay, 35,000 acres are burning. The Cedar Fire in San Diego has been the deadliest one: 9 deaths, 300 homes destroyed, 150 in Scripps Ranch. The Paradise Fire in San Diego: 160 structures were destroyed, 75 cars, 2 deaths, and so far not contained. In Los Angeles County, it is the Verdale Fire, 9,000 acres. In Ventura, there are two major fires, Simi Valley and Piru. We are very worried about those. And at Riverside, there is one major fire. The Governor has not yet asked for an emergency declaration in Riverside, but it may come to that. If it does, I am very hopeful that the President will act on that request as well because we have lost six homes in Riverside, and the size of the fire there is 11,000 acres.

This declaration by the President is welcome news for us.

We need to put aside all politics now. We have an outgoing Governor. We have an incoming Governor. We all have to just join hands in this because our people are scared. They are filled with anxiety. They want this over. They want to go on and rebuild their lives. I join with my colleague in expressing my condolences to those who